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THE STRUCTURE OF OBADIAH.

BY JOHN M. P. SMITH,
The University of Chicago.

The difficulty of the little book of Obadiah is in inverse ratio to its size. It has long been the occasion of various conflicting hypotheses as to its meaning and origin. The first important contribution to a right understanding of the book was made by Ewald, to whom belongs the credit of many another first step in the path of progress in Biblical interpretation. The recognition of older and younger elements in this prophecy was Ewald's distinctive merit. To an older prophet, a contemporary of Isaiah, he assigned the first ten verses of Obadiah, which were preserved also in Jer., chap. 49, but in a less perfect form. A prophet living amid the innumerable sufferings of the captivity took up this earlier oracle and supplemented it by vss. 11-21, of which vss. 11-14, 16, 19-21 were entirely his own product, while vss. 15, 17, 18 were fragments of the older prophecy carefully worked over by the exilic prophet.

Hitzig held to the priority of the oracle as found in Jeremiah, but departed from all his predecessors in placing the origin of the Obadiah prophecy in its present form as far down as 312 B. C., at which time Antigonos sent an expedition against Petra.

Franz Delitzsch, Keil, Orelli, and Kirkpatrick maintain the unity of the prophecy, and the priority of Obadiah to Jer. 49:7-22. They find the only suitable occasion of the prophecy in connection with the attack upon Jerusalem by Philistines and Arabs in the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16, 17).

Kuenen, followed closely by Cornill, Driver, Wildeboer, and Selbie (in Hastings' *Dictionary*), took up the suggestion of Ewald and found in vss. 1-9 an older prophecy from some unknown period before the captivity, and in vss. 10-21 an utterance from some time after 536 B. C., probably about the middle of the fifth century B. C. Obadiah and Jeremiah both used the older oracle, but Jeremiah much the more freely. The view of König (*Einleitung*) varies slightly from this in that he assigns to the early period vss. 1-10, 16a, 18, 19a, 20b, which belong to an age

prior to Amos, while the remainder was inspired by the experiences of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile. Jer. 49:7-22 simply reproduces Obadiah.

The most recent defenders of the unity of Obadiah are Norbert Peters, *Die Prophetie Obadjah's* (1892), and Albert Condamin, "L'unité d'Abdias," *Revue biblique*, Vol. IX (1900), pp. 261-68. Peters finds the occasion of the prophecy in connection with the war between Amaziah of Judah and Joash of Israel, which followed close upon Amaziah's victory over Edom. Condamin's plea for the unity rests solely upon considerations of rhythm and strophe, and does not concern itself with finding a suitable historical background for the utterance.

Wellhausen was the first to find the main dividing-point between the new and the old after vs. 14. Eliminating vss. 6, 8, 9, 12 as interpolations, he dates vss. 1-14, 15*b* in the first half of the fifth century B. C., and vss. 15*a*, 16-21 at some later time. Wellhausen's position has been sustained in all essentials by the two leading commentators of the last decade, viz., Nowack and Marti, and by Cheyne in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

George Adam Smith adheres to the pre-exilic date of the original prophecy, used both by Obadiah and Jeremiah. This older oracle is found in vss. 1-6, while vss. 7, 10-21 come from the days of the exile, and vss. 8, 9 "form a difficulty."

Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, Zweite Reihe, Band III (1900), pp. 425-57, gives a characteristically original and ingenious interpretation of Obadiah. The older prophecy consists of vss. 1-18, minus vss. 13, 17*b* and a few detached glosses. This oracle was given in connection with an unsuccessful revolt in Judah and Jerusalem in the reign of Darius, at which time the Edomites turned against the Jews.¹ The evidence for this revolt is furnished by a new interpretation of the book of Daniel. The remainder of the prophecy, vss. 19-21, was added some time in the Maccabean age, and probably in 63 B. C. when Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, the sons of Alexander Jannæus, were struggling for the kingdom, and Aristobulus was besieged in the temple by

¹ Nowack (p. 177), in stating that Winckler places the original prophecy in the reign of Antiochus, totally misrepresents Winckler's view. Nowack apparently did not read Winckler far enough, for on the very next page (p. 431) the latter, speaking of the age of Antiochus as a possible date, says: "Dazu kommt, dass ton und sprache des liedes kaum in eine so späte zeit weisen . . . das lied ist entstanden zwischen der erobrung durch Nebukadnezar und der durch Antiochos. Dann müsste also Jerusalem einmal in der zwischenzeit erobert worden sein." The exact time for the origin of the prophecy decided upon by Winckler is indicated on p. 455 of his discussion, and also in *KAT*,³ p. 295.

Harith and Antipater of Edom, the allies of Hyrcanus. The siege was raised upon the approach of the Roman army under Pompey.

While scholars have been thus busy with the questions of the date and unity of the book, its poetic form has not received due consideration. The only treatments of this phase of the prophecy are those of Condamin in *Revue biblique* for 1900, and Sievers, *Metrische Studien*, I (1901), pp. 478–82. Both of these ignore the results of historical criticism, proceeding on the supposition of the unity of the book. Sievers, moreover, makes no attempt to secure strophic structure, while Condamin has recourse to the generally discredited theories of D. H. Müller and Zenner, with their strophe, antistrophe, alternate strophe, responsion, and inclusion.

The present arrangement follows Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti in regarding vss. 7*d*, 8, 9, 15*a*, 16–21 as later additions to the original prophecy. It retains vs. 6 as part of the original, with Kuenen, Driver, G. A. Smith, Winckler, *et al.* Its chief variation from previous results is in athetizing vss. 12–14. This step has been taken partly in view of the difference in the metre of these verses, which is the regular *qinah* rhythm, while the preceding and following context is in ordinary trimeter. Variations of metre within the same poem are, of course, found in both ancient and modern poetry, and Hebrew poetry furnishes several examples. But the variation here is in the middle of a prophetic discourse, is accompanied by no introductory word or statement, and is sustained through six lines. Not infrequently a passage in *qinah* movement occurs at the beginning of an address (*e. g.*, Am. 5:2 *sqq.*), or is found as the closing climax of a speech (*e. g.*, Hos. 6:7–11); and occasional lapses into this rhythm for a line or two are very common (*e. g.*, vs. 6 of this prophecy, where the dirge rhythm furnishes a fitting closing line for the strophe²); but parallels for an unannounced and extended variation such as this are wanting. Furthermore, the transition from the past to the present which these verses involve is exceedingly abrupt. The supposition that the prophet here transports himself in imagination to the period which he is describing, and details the events of that distant time in the form of deprecatory pleas to the

² Budde, *ZAW.*, Vol. II, p. 34, makes the *qinah* extend also through vs. 7, but this involves the acceptance of the division of the verse as found in the Massoretic accentuation; see below, note 13.

foe, is at the best forced and unnatural, and without a parallel in the Old Testament. Nor is it possible to render לֹא with the imperfect in the sense, "thou shouldst not have, etc.," for לֹא can only refer to the present or future, except in the few cases in which it has assumed the functions of אֵל with a historical tense, and such an interpretation is clearly out of the question here. The passage is most naturally taken as the utterance of a participant in the conditions it sets forth, and as such it has no place as a part of the original oracle. It is wholly lacking in data which would fix the time of its origin more definitely. It may have been occasioned by some devastation of Jerusalem during the Persian or Greek age, record of which has not been preserved. It might even be older than the prophecy in which it is now incorporated, and its absence from Jeremiah's version of that prophecy would not militate seriously against such a supposition.

The book as a whole is thus constituted of three elements: A, The Vision of Obadiah concerning Edom, vss. 1-7c, 10, 11, 15b; B, A Protest against the Unbrotherly Conduct of Edom, vss. 12-14; C, The Coming Triumph of Israel over All its Foes, vss. 15a, 16-21; and the fragment, vss. 8-9, of which a variant appears in Jer. 49:7.³ These three elements are not vitally related one to another. They differ in form, in thought, in point of view, and in spirit. Their only bond of union is that they all arose out of the same general cause, viz., Edom's cruel treatment of Israel.

A is composed of five six-line trimeter strophes. The movement of the thought is very clear: Strophe I describes the sending-forth of Yahweh's decree against Edom and her resulting humiliation. Strophe II pictures the former arrogance of Edom which would set even Yahweh at defiance. Strophe III narrates in detail the present utter desolation of Edom. Strophe IV contrasts the treachery of Edom's allies with Edom's own treacherous treatment of Israel. Strophe V recalls the details of Edom's former cruelty to Israel and closes with the climax, "thy

³ Vss. 8 and 9 form a five-line strophe, thus varying from the context, made up of six-line strophes, in form as well as suddenly transferring the thought from the present, actually existing condition to the future Day of Yahweh. The text runs:

8 הָלֹא בְיוֹם הַהוּא נִאֲסִיחֻהָ
וְהֶאֱבַדְתִּי חֲכָמִים מֵאֲדוֹם
וְתִבְנֶה מֵהָר עֶשׂו
9 וְחָתוּ גְבוּרֵיךְ תִּימָן
לְמַעַן יִכְרַת־אִישׁ מֵהָר עֶשׂו

deed now returns upon thine own head." B forms only one six-line strophe in *qinah* or pentameter movement. C falls into three strophes of four, eight, and eight lines respectively. The rhythm is rough and broken, varying between trimeter and tetrameter, and in this respect the section departs widely from the smooth, regular movement of both A and B.

A. THE VISION OF OBADIAH CONCERNING EDOM.

חזון עבדיה

לֹאדֹם ⁴		
שְׁמוּעָה שִׁמְעֵנוּ מֵאֵת יְהוָה	1	I
וְצִיר בְּגוֹיִם שֶׁלַח		
הַתִּקְבְּצוּ וּבֹאוּ עֲלֵיהָ ⁵		
וְקוֹמְנוּ לְמִלְחָמָה		
הִנֵּה קֶטֶן נִתְחַדֵּךְ בְּגוֹיִם	2	
בְּזוֹי אֶתְּהָ בְּאִדָם ⁶		
זֶדֶן לְבֶךְ הַשִּׁיאֵךְ		
שִׁכְנִי בַחֲגוּי סֹלַע	3	II
תּוֹפְשִׁי ⁷ מִרוֹם גִּבְעָה ⁸		
אִמְרָ בְּלִבּוֹ מִיִּיּוֹרְדֵי אֶרֶץ		
אִסִּיתְּגַבִּיחַ כְּנֶשֶׁר ⁹ קֶנֶךְ	4	
מִשֵּׁם אֲוִירֶךְ נֶאֱסִי־יְהוָה		

⁴ לֹאדֹם is probably a later element in the superscription, as appears from the variant in Jer. לֹאדֹם כֹּה אִמְרָ יְהוָה עֲבָדָיו, and from the inappropriateness of such an expression as שְׁמוּעָה שִׁמְעֵנוּ, or even שְׁמוּעָה שִׁמְעֵתִי (Jer. 49:14), in the mouth of Yahweh; so Selbie, Marti, *et al*; cf. Nowack.

⁵ This and the following line are taken from Jer. 49:14, where the original form seems to have been better preserved. The line in Obad. קוֹמְנוּ וּנְקוֹמָה עֲלֵיהָ לְמִלְחָמָה is too long, is repetitious, and lacks the descriptive quality of the lines in Jeremiah. וּנְקוֹמָה seems to be agloss suggested by שִׁמְעֵנוּ of l. 1; it is unsuitable in the mouth of a messenger (so Hitzig). Cf. Sievers. The reading עֲלֵיהָ (Wellhausen, Nowack, Duhm, Marti) is unnecessary.

⁶ בְּזוֹי אֶתְּהָ מֵאִדָם. Jer. 49:15 בְּזוֹי אֶתְּהָ מֵאִדָם is required as a parallel for בְּגוֹיִם (Nowack, Selbie, Marti), and אֶתְּהָ is necessary to the metre (*contra* Sievers).

⁷ So Jer. 49:16. This is required as a parallel to שִׁכְנִי; moreover, it completes the metre and the sense of l. 3. So Wellhausen, Nowack, Sievers, and Selbie.

⁸ This word, preserved in Jer. 49:16, seems preferable to שְׁבִתָּי, the reading in Obad., because it makes the traditional pointing מִרוֹם intelligible, it furnishes a better parallel for סֹלַע, and it seems to have suggested the term תְּגַבִּיחַ in l. 5.

⁹ The Obad. version inserts here: וְאִם בֵּין כּוֹכְבִּים [ת]שִׁים, but this is lacking in Jer. 49:16, is superfluous to the metre, and its presence leaves תְּגַבִּיחַ without an object. Cf. Sievers.

אם בצירים באו לך	¹⁰ 5b	III
הלוא ישאירו עללות		
אם גנבים בלילה ¹¹	5a	
הלוא יגנבו דים ¹²		
איך נחפשו עשו	6	
נבעו מצפוניו		
עד הגבול שלחוך	7	IV
כל אנשי בריתך השיאוך ¹³		
יכלו לך אנשי שלמך ¹⁴		
ישימו מזור תחתך ¹⁵		
מחמס אחיך תנסך בושה ¹⁶	10	
ונכרתה לעולם		
ביום עמדך מנגד ¹⁷	11	V
ונכרים באו שערו		
ועל-ירושלם ידו גורל		
גם-אתה כאחד מהם		
כאשר עשית יעשה לך	15b	
גמלך ישוב בראשך		

¹⁰ This transposition of vs. 5b is found in Jer. 49:9, and is required by the reconstruction of the lines here adopted. So Sievers.

¹¹ So Jer. 49:9. In Obad. the text runs:

אם גנבים באו לך
אם שודדי לילה

But באו לך is a dittograph from vs. 5b (so Sievers), and אם שודדי is a gloss or variant to אם גנבים (so G. A. Smith and Sievers). Wellhausen, Nowack, Selbie, Cheyne, and Marti retain לך באו, but omit the entire line אם שודדי לילה, disregarding the reading in Jeremiah.

¹² איך נדמיתה is omitted as a gloss, with Wellhausen, Condamin, Sievers, Cheyne, and Marti.

¹³ השיאוך belongs with the preceding context (so \mathfrak{C} , \mathfrak{S} , and most modern commentators), rather than with the following as in \mathfrak{MT} .

¹⁴ לחמך of \mathfrak{MT} is lacking in \mathfrak{C} , and is to be omitted as a corrupt dittograph of שלמך; so Wellhausen, G. A. Smith, Sievers, Selbie, Marti, *et al.*

¹⁵ \mathfrak{MT} adds בו תבונה אין, which is a marginal note (so Nowack, Cheyne, Marti, *et al.*) probably suggested by vs. 8. Cf. Winckler's proposal to read תבוא and transpose the clause to follow מצפוניו of vs. 6b.

¹⁶ מקטל of vs. 9 belongs to vs. 10 (so \mathfrak{C} , and nearly all interpreters), and with יעקב constituted a marginal note on מחמס אחיך; when incorporated in the text it was forced apart to admit מחמס אחיך within it (so Sievers). Nowack, Selbie, and Marti drop מקטל, but the retention of יעקב makes the line too long.

¹⁷ \mathfrak{MT} contains another line here: ביום שבית זרים הילך; but the thought of this line is prematurely introduced, the carrying away of spoil must follow the entrance into the gates, and the division of the booty. It sounds like a prosaic marginal note.

B. A PROTEST AGAINST EDMOM'S UNBROTHERLY CONDUCT.

- 13a אֶל־תִּבְרֹא בִשְׂעַר עַמִּי || בְּיוֹם אִדָּם
 12a וְאֵל תִּרְא בְּאֵיךְ¹⁸ || בְּיוֹם נִכְרְתוּ¹⁹
 12c וְאֵל תִּגְדֹּל פִּיךְ || בְּיוֹם צִרָה
 13c וְאֵל תִּשְׁלַח־נָא²⁰ בְּחִילוֹ || בְּיוֹם אִבְדָם²¹
 14 וְאֶל־תַּעֲמִד עַל הַפֶּרֶק || לַהֲכַרִּית אֶת־פְּלִיטוֹ
 וְאֶל־תִּסְגֵּר שְׂרִידוֹ || בְּיוֹם צִרָה

C. ISRAEL'S APPROACHING TRIUMPH.

- 15a כִּי־קִרְבַּב יוֹם־יִהְיֶה עַל־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם I
 16 כִּי כֹאשֶׁר שְׂתִיתֶם עַל־יְהוָה קִדְשִׁי
 יִשְׁתּוּ כָל־הַגּוֹיִם תַּמִּיד
 וְשִׁתּוּ וְנָעוּ²² וְהָיוּ כְּלֹא הָיוּ
 17 וּבִהָר צִיּוֹן תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה²³ II
 וִירְשׁוּ²⁴ אֶת מוֹרְשֵׁיהֶם
 18 וְהָיָה בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ
 וּבֵית יוֹסֵף לַהֲבָה
 וּבֵית עֲשׂוֹ לִקֵּשׁ
 וּלְקַח בָּהֶם וּאֲכָלוּם
 וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה שְׂרִיד לְבֵית עֲשׂוֹ
 כִּי יִהְיֶה דָּבָר

¹⁸ Vss. 12 and 13 seem to be variants of an earlier common text (so Winckler, Marti). Vs. 13b (וְאֶל־תִּרְא גַם־אֶתָּה בִּרְעִיתוֹ) is only another form of vs. 12a, while vs. 12b (וְאֵל תִּגְדֹּל פִּיךְ) is a prosaic repetition of vs. 12c. Wellhausen and Nowack omit vs. 12 entirely as a gloss. In vs. 12a בְּיוֹם is clearly a dittograph (so Winckler, Nowack, and Marti).

¹⁹ אִדָּם. As above, Winckler, who cites the parallel infinitive אִבְדָם of vs. 12b in support of the change. אִדָּם is ἀπαξ λεγόμενον. אִדָּם renders the last word of the variant line (vs. 13b) by ἀλεθρον αὐτῶν, and this is the only occurrence in the Old Testament of ἀλεθρος as an equivalent of אִדָּם, which now stands in אִדָּם of vs. 13b. However, ἀλεθρεύειν is the rendering for כָּרַת in Judg. 6:25, 28, 30 and Num. 4:18. Hence אִדָּם's rendering of אִדָּם in vs. 13b and the אִדָּם of vs. 12a point to the Niph'al infinitive נִכְרְתוּ as the original reading.

²⁰ תִּשְׁלַח־נָא. Ewald, Olshausen, Wellhausen, König, Nowack, Selbie, Marti, et al. read תִּשְׁלַח, which Oort (*Textus Hebraici Emendationes*, 1900) modifies to תִּשְׁלַח. But the reading adopted here is much easier and is subject to no serious objections. Judg. 19:23 furnishes a case of נָא attached to the verb as here, rather than to אֵל, as is more customary; and שְׁלַח in the sense of יָרַד occurs in 2 Sam. 6:6; 22:17 (= Ps. 18:17). See N. Peters, *Die Prophetie Obadjah's* (1892), p. 98.

²¹ אִבְדָם. אִבְדָם ἀπωλίας αὐτῶν, exactly as in vs. 12b, where the text is אִבְדָם; so also Winckler and Nowack. Marti, אִבְדָם.

²² וְנָעוּ. As above: Wellhausen, Nowack, G. A. Smith, Condamin, Selbie, Marti, et al. Sievers omits it as a gloss. The line is too long, and might easily be lightened by treating וְשִׁתּוּ as a dittograph from the preceding line. But that the two lines began with the same word as far back as the time of the Greek translation is rendered probable by the fact that Codex Vaticanus of אִדָּם omits l. 3 completely.

²³ אִדָּם adds וְהָיָה קִדְשִׁי, which seems to be a marginal note; cf. Winckler.

²⁴ אִדָּם adds בֵּית יַעֲקֹב, which is probably a repetition from the following line.

- 19 וִירְשׁוּ הַנֶּגֶב²⁵ וְהַשְׂפֵּלָה²⁶ III
 וִירְשׁוּ אֶת שְׂדֵה אֲפְרַיִם²⁷
 וּבְנֵימִין אֶת הַגִּלְעָד
 20 וַגִּלְתָּ הַחֲלִיחָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל²⁸
 וַגִּלְתָּ יְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בַּסְּפָרַד
 יִרְשׁוּ אֶת עֵרֵי הַנֶּגֶב
 21 וְעָלוּ מוֹשְׁעִים בַּהֵר צִיּוֹן²⁹
 וְהִיתָה לִיהוָה הַמְּלוּכָה

²⁵ \mathfrak{A}^c adds אֶת־הָהָר עֲשׂו, which is treated as a gloss by Wellhausen, Nowack Sievers, Cheyne, Marti, *et al.*

²⁶ \mathfrak{A}^c adds אֶת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים, a gloss; so also the scholars cited in note 24.

²⁷ וְאֶת שְׂדֵה שִׁמְרוֹן of \mathfrak{A}^c seems to be a gloss; so Marti.

²⁸ \mathfrak{A}^c אשר כְּנַעֲנִים עַד צִרְפָּת is a corrupt gloss.

²⁹ \mathfrak{A}^c adds לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־הָהָר עֲשׂו, a gloss; so Marti. The text of vss. 19c-21 is incurably corrupt.